

KEYNOTE SPEECH
CONNECTIVITY 2006

BY

SANTIAGO DE MARCO



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I will give you a picture of what is really happening in the world today. It is extremely important that we young people are clear about the facts. I do not intend with this to be negative because, on the contrary, I am full of hope. It is only that I believe that any true healing process can begin only if we are fully conscious of the symptoms.

I feel anguish for the future of our children and youth who survive amid hunger, in poverty, misery, and uncertainty, in sadness, in hopelessness, and above all, all the injustices they are exposed to.

We, all together can contribute to change this terrible sensation of exposure that seems to be the destiny of millions of our children around the world.

The biggest source of life lives in the respect for and possibility of integrating the many different ways of life of the people and of the various nations.

This is what happened in our countries when thousands of immigrants arrived in our infinite land, cultivating it, starting industries, mingling their blood and, over time, developing new races. Colonization has also left its footprints. These were the foundations on which our nations have been built.

The countries in Latin America have been amazingly rich since the time of our own indigenous people. We have had everything. Strong cultures.

Today we are countries who are brutally robbed by the corrupt systems inside our nations but also by those outside.

Sunken in misery, without money for covering the most urgent needs in health and education, we are, as other parts of the world also experience, obligated and pressured by international organizations to reduce the budget for social development. They take the money away from the ageing citizens who have worked all their lives, take the money from the hospitals and from the education of the coming generations.

It seems there is no way out, because we owe these international organizations unimaginable amounts of money which have been given to our very worst governments, such as, for example, the military dictatorships.

We are now poor countries. We suffer under a sense of impotence, which compromises our dignity, and above all, the lives of all our children.

There seems to be no sign of a limit to so much suffering and lack of dignity; for so much misery and for the anguish of millions of men and women who survive only on a piece of bread which itself has been extremely difficult to obtain. But as, we know, the children are the most abused.

With every hour the seats of real power the world is consolidated and at the same time globalized. Strong corporations and international policies extend themselves to countries and over their peoples, bringing with them the dictatorship of hunger and misery without respecting culture, ideology or basic human rights.

These are the forces, which seem to be reigning the destiny of our planet. These also are the forces that multiply the hopelessness of our generations. **It is Globalization without humanity.** We are told of the great results and benefits of the wonderful global systems, but they pretend to ignore that their only miracle has been to concentrate in a fifth part of the population of the world 80% of the wealth of the planet, while the rest dies of hunger and misery.

It is extremely difficult for young people today to find real human personalities, real individualities, as role models who are an inspiration to those around them.

We, the people at this conference, are privileged to be able to meet and get to know of one another, to be present here. We can hear about so many wonderful projects that not only inspire us but also stimulate us to become active. However, for me it is important to realize that we are a minority. Millions of youth don't have this opportunity. They are, as I am speaking, working in sweatshops around the world or perhaps involved in one of the many inexplicable wars currently being fought.

They might be working in the companies that provide us with most of the things that we are using here in order to have this conference. Food companies, computers, cell phones, making this paper or our clothing. Others may not even have a job...

However, I think we may never let ourselves fall into depression regarding such themes; it is simply an indulgence that we cannot allow ourselves.

We have to be convinced that there is a way to contribute to the protection of humanity and so never become resigned.

Globalization has its good and fascinating sides. It is no longer possible for us and for the nations to live our lives thinking of ourselves alone; to think only of oneself is lacking in morality and is simply insufficient.

What is needed now is to develop ourselves. We need to become strong individuals within ourselves so that we can consciously reach out and have an impact globally.

The idea that our countries, or the world, would find a way out of this social reality in which we live today of their own accord is a vain illusion. Unfortunately the world is directed by an imperialist ideology, which does not seem to unite the people of various different races, but instead imposes a single and absolute model that forces all life and culture into only one way of thinking.

But look at Nature. Humanity has received a natural world in which each element is unique and different, unique and different as every one of the clouds that we have seen in our lives, the flow of the rivers, the colors and the form of the trees and leaves, the winds, the animals and the size and color of each hardworking hand of man and woman. Every human being is mysterious and sacredly unique.

Even though we know and understand the complexity and the urgency of this time, we are also aware that we are involved in one of the most difficult missions of all.

To begin a process of reconstruction, bringing peace and social justice, requires all of our most noble human qualities, our thinking, our will and our deepest and most sacred forces of the heart.

It seems to be an enormous sacrifice. But this is the important task that we are being called upon to realize today.

The lack of human gestures in our world engenders a violence which we cannot confront simply with the use of guns.

We can do this only by working together and building strong human relationships. Only developing love, trust and courage not only in ourselves, but also in our communities; developing a sense and a longing for life, a conviction that the human being is more than what we see reflected in the world about us will help us to create and/or to begin a true and meaningful process of healing.

Each one of us who considers him or herself to have experienced peace at some point in life must be active in fighting the fear and the mistrust with which so many people look at one another today. For the possibility of changing our social situation is based on the look that each one of us gives to the other. This, in my view, is of extreme importance.

Even though we might still ignore where the current social circumstances are leading us, a new conception of life is already among us. More and more, in the midst of poverty, danger and unemployment there are people who manage to overcome their outer difficulties and are able to stand for the most noble human qualities and through them, manifest their true higher being.

We have come into violent, dangerous and cruel times not only in our own countries but in the world at large. This fact is confirmed by the statistics. But equally true is that there are signs (as we can see right here) that there is something alive in the youth, something essential, which not allow a single universal system to be the only basis for our lives. So we are networking with all kinds of different people and cultures, connecting, living with one another, helping each other and also together helping others. All these aspects take us to the most important point, which is for me, the coming together and forming of communities. Forming communities of young people and older people who come from all continents bringing the energy and enthusiasm of the youth together with the experience and wisdom of the older generations.

Let us take up the responsibility. It is in our hands that the destiny of humanity has been laid.

Dr. Steiner ended a lecture on the social question saying:

“...despite everything that surrounds us we ought to be convinced that humanity will find a way out of this tragic destiny of our time. But we must recognize the signs and the necessity of working together for the healing and the wellbeing of society”

I am sincerely looking for a social alternative where peace and justice prevail for everyone. The construction of a new social space, in which the different ways of living and being of the people and nations would be respected and cared for, seems to be a utopia at the present time.

We need the will to dream, the will to open up new spaces, the will to generate more utopias and this consists in not allowing ourselves to see a world that is only what we see in front of us.

To give form to a vision it is necessary to see what is not yet visible. If this world can be changed it is because the human being has the innate capacity of creating change within established structures. Take time to observe the young, and look to yourself to see if a single day passes in which you do not generate some change around you. I think we definitely create change not only around but also inside ourselves, and when we change inwardly, managing to liberate ourselves from our own fears (as a very wise person once said) then our presence helps others to overcome their fears.

The situation of the world is serious and it belongs to us all. Millions of human beings survive in misery and among them, of course, are the children. There are millions of children whose first perceptions and experiences seem to be a conspiracy of horror and abuse in their lives.

This terrible unprotected, exposed childhood undermines humanity, reveals a serious level of immorality to which our age can descend. For it is a real shame, it is a crime that 250 million children in the world have to work, and to work in terrible, terrible conditions.

Will these little abandoned ones, who belong to us as if they were our own family, be the ones to open our eyes and our hearts one day, inviting us to live a more human life built on understanding and the on a commitment to social awareness, responsible for the actions we take?

Let's celebrate the lives of those who make an effort not to betray our human values.

And lastly:

From thinking to action/ from action to thinking

When do we take action?

There comes a time when our inner ear has finally to listen to our inner voice, to the call that we sometimes consciously, but mostly unconsciously, do not want to hear. Suddenly

it calls to you. This call may also come from outside. We can ignore it or we can face it. To face it we need courage, love and trust.

There are many examples of such actions in the organizations represented at this conference.

“Hope is not optimism. It is not the conviction that something has a happy ending but is the certainty that something has a meaning independent of its success or not.

So I think, it is from another place that we catch the most profound and important hope, the only hope that in spite of all is able to inspire us to good actions. It is this hope that is the only source of greatness of the human spirit and its endeavor. It is this hope which gives us the strength to experience life always anew, even in the most difficult situations”.

Vaclav Havel